

Getting Ready for the Rebound in Giving: The Five Steps to Better Fundraising

1. **Make a plan for the future of your organization.**

Do you have a strategic plan? If so, make sure it's current. If yours is outdated, or if you don't have one, make one now. Prospective donors, especially your critically important major gifts prospects, want to know that your organization has a future and a plan for getting there.

2. **Make a strong and compelling case for support based on your strategic plan.**

You're in competition with many other organizations for charitable dollars. To stand out you must have a unique and compelling case for support. Your development program must be expressed in terms of added value and the impact you'll have on the lives of the people you serve. Donors want to know what difference their gift will make - what will you do with their money that you cannot do now? Whether it's for small things now or large, transformational projects later on - all of it should be part of your strategic plan and part of your case for support.

3. **Strengthen your volunteer leadership.**

Most of the money you raise, no matter annual giving or major gifts, will come from a relatively small number of donors. To acquire these special gifts you need the right people to do the asking. If you don't have board or fundraising committee members who can give and otherwise acquire gifts of size, you need to find them, and find them now. It's not easy but the quality of your leadership will make all the difference in your development program, most particularly when it comes time to solicit top prospective donors. (One of the best ways to attract top leadership for fundraising is by involving them first, one way or another, in your strategic planning process.)

4. **Target, evaluate and cultivate major gifts prospects.**

It's important that you get together with the most knowledgeable and well-connected people you know - members of your board or fundraising committee, or people on the outside - to identify your best prospects and figure out how to engage them. Make a list of your top thirty prospective donors, identify their giving potential, and then make a plan for their cultivation and solicitation.

5. **Find new and creative ways of telling your story.**

You have a brochure and a pledge card, a list of named giving opportunities and a few back annual reports. Now, it's time to stand out from your competition by making the most of the newest online media and social networking technologies to tell your story. You'll reach more people, you'll have more impact, and you'll have a new online, universally accessible hub for all your off-line fundraising programming. We've had great success with our iCase™ program developed for this very purpose. Learn more about iCase™ at www.fundraising.org/services_icase.htm.